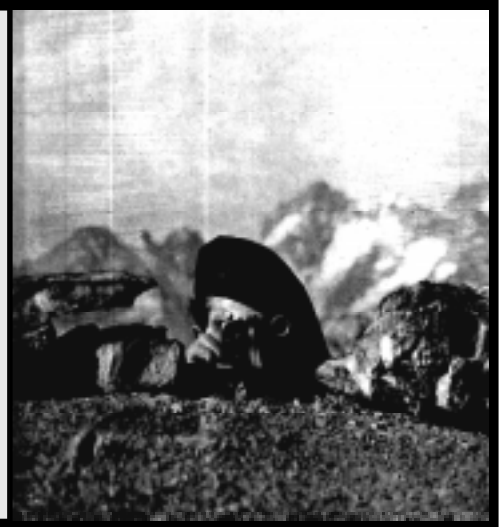


VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

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PREP FIRE

Hello and welcome to View From The Trenches, the first of what is hoped to be a (semi-)regular British ASL fanzine. Although ASL 'zines seem to come and go, none has come from Britain, and offered a British view on ASL. Until now.

So, what can you expect to find in View From The Trenches? Well, news, reviews, tactics, scenario hints, stories, in fact anything to do with ASL. Most importantly, I want to give us British ASL players a chance to share our views, and allow us to keep into touch with each other.

Let's get the British ASL scene going (and keep it alive and kicking).

The most important thing I personally would like is to see lots of stuff on general tactics and play. Too many people seem to enjoy coming up with 'perfect plan' scenario articles, which, while interesting, don't tend to be of much help when you are viewing a scenario for the first time. And, in common with most such articles, they tend only to concentrate on the start of the scenario, since the number of variables that can affect the course of a game, particularly ASL, make it difficult to predict what the mid and late game situations might be. So, what I want to do is to offer more of a look at tactics in general, much like the 'SL Clinic' use to do in 'The General'.

Scenarios are the lifeblood of any open-

ended system like ASL. So, I'm on the lookout for lots of these. Tested or not. I realise that a lot of players may not have time to give their own scenarios much playtesting, but that many players want to see new scenarios. So, feel free to submit any scenario you design. All I ask is that you include a brief scenario design notes covering any aspects of your scenario.

I'm open to contributions on any aspect of ASL, but don't expect to get rich out of submitting stuff. All I can offer you is the satisfaction of knowing you're helping to keep the British ASL scene alive. So, whether it's an article on general tactics, a scenario dissection, a rules discussion, a variant, or a humorous look at ASL, write away.

Anyway, 'til next time, roll low and prosper, as Spock might say.

Pete Phillipps

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COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOK

The aim of 'Commander's Notebook' is to provide brief notes on the play of ASL. These can be tactical hints, scenario notes, or even a look at a particular aspect of the system, such as armour, air support, or even seaborne assault. This time, a look at a few of the more popular infantry scenarios.

As an introduction to 'Commander's Notebook', I've taken a look at a few of the infantry scenarios the system offers, and provided a few statistics about them. They take the form of the initial impressions of the battalion commander as he approaches the situation, and his subsequent after action thoughts. As such, they are short, sharp, and to the point.

ASL-1 - FIGHTING WITH-DRAWAL

Played twice (Finns 0 - 2 Soviets), taking 4-5 hours to play. Based on play so far it seems pro-Soviet, as the Finns lack the time to break through the Soviet delaying action so they can exit the board.

The Soviets must delay the Finns, which means causing breaks. Outnumbered in firepower, they should rely on attacks from out of sight positions as the Finns advance. The initial defense is a concealed screen along hexrow AA, a second line along hexrow X (with concealed LMG in V4) and HIP squads in H9 and K4 (2nd Level). In GT1 move the MMG to W1 to cover hexrow W. The Soviets must try to keep the Finns north of hexrow O-Q until GT4.

The Finns must blast the Soviets out of their way, advancing fast. As they must use GT1 to kill the Soviet front-line they effectively have 6 GT to move, which means a rate of about 4 hexrows per GT. If they exit, they must also leave some forces covering south edge to prevent Soviets exiting. A broad advance doesn't allow the Finns to concentrate their FP, so a flank advance appears best. Tried in the north, but is too easy for the Soviets to defend, so might be worth trying the south.

The Soviet plan works, but costs squads. Lose 1-2 squads in rearguard each turn as the others pull back a little. Finns

haven't advanced fast enough in early GT and by GT4 have been struggling.

RB6 - TURNED AWAY

Played three times (Germans 0 - 3 Soviets), taking about 3.5-4 hours to play. Despite the lack of German wins, seems balanced as most games have been very tight.

So far, the basic Soviet set-up has seen a fortified DD41 used as HQ twice, and a fortified FF37 once, with the remaining units in a shield along the FF37-BB40-AA44 axis. The basic tactic is to force the Germans to waste valuable time breaking through, while also inflicting breaks and (hopefully) kills to gradually reduce their overall firepower.

The Germans should deploy into two equal assault groups, one in the north the other in the south. The basic plan is to develop three firebases around AA40, AA42 and AA45. The tactic is to seize the Soviet flanks and use firepower from there to reduce DD41. While this goes on a lone squad moves along the northern gully to FF37 in case this is the Soviet HQ - should EE45 be the HQ it can easily be reached from the south using the rubble to cover the approach.

GEN-T1 - GAVIN TAKE

Played five times (German 3 - 2 US), taking 2-3 hours to play. Seems to be fairly well balanced, as most games have gone to the last turn.

The Germans should set up with the aim of controlling the northern parts of rows I and Y by having a squad and MMG on the 1st Level of 3R3 and 3S3. The other forces should be spread around village, with the aim of sending a LMG armed squad up onto hill 522 (3W6) to deter US advance onto the hill. The plan is to gradually fallback to the area 3K10-3O8-3R8-3I10, and cover 3Q10 so shots may be taken against US forces trying to exit.

The US should enter Gavin and 3 squads along the northern edge to bring fire onto 3S3 and 3U3. Once these Germans are broken/eliminated, Gavin-Maloney push through the village and on to 3Q10. Ostberg Force comes over the hills and into the woods, trying to reach 3Q10 from the rear. It

might be worth trying to send Ostberg Force into 3M2 and then onto village, combining with Gavin to sweep thru the village.

The German plan works well, holding up the US. The US tactic entails destroying main the German forces. The superior US leadership allows the rapid rally of broken units, allowing them to keep going.

GEN-T14 - GAMBIT

Played once (Germans 1 - 0 New Zealanders), taking about 5-6 hours to play. A tense race that needs aggressive New Zealander play.

The New Zealanders should deploy the onboard platoon on one map edge and enter the other troops on the opposite edge, thus forcing the Germans to spread their forces out. The entering units should basically plan on breaking thru on their edge and running for the nearest exit. Use a couple of LMG-armed HS to interdict German units trying to move across. Remember the ATR makes a good LMG as there are no vehicles around. The mortars are best used to provide Smoke to cover movement across Open Ground.

The New Zealanders have 28 VP worth of troops. If they lose at least 9 VP of these they cannot win. Since the onboard platoon will be worth about 5 VP (2 squads and an 8-0) the Germans should concentrate against it so as to destroy it in the first two GT. The other units should be spread out so as to quickly respond to the New Zealander advance. Try to delay the New Zealanders until the onboard platoon is destroyed, then fall back towards their exit target.

GEN-T16 - STRAYER'S STRAYS

Played three times (Germans 3 - 0 US), taking 2-3 hours to play. Much depends on the state of the US forces at the end of US GT1. Seems to slightly favour the Germans though.

The Germans must delay the Americans, but initially doesn't know where they'll enter from. The long front makes it impractical to cover it all (he who defends everything defends nothing), so concentrating in the centre and lightly covering the flanks is the best idea. Deploy some HS to help cover the

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DEFENSIVE PLANNING

A brief look at a number of factors to consider when planning and setting up a defensive position.

Whenever you are planning a defense, there are several things to bear in mind. First and foremost, always remember to defend the ground you must hold to win. Although this can be done directly, by placing troops in the area, it is more often done by defending the surrounding area and the approaches.

Any defense needs depth, so it can absorb the enemy attack and slow down its momentum. A "thin red line" can be easily breached. Although the easiest way to provide depth is to have troops spread out in ever-widening defensive circles, all too often a lack of troops prevents such depth. In these cases, each position should be able to provide mutual support to neighbouring positions. Ideally, each position should be able to bring fire to bear on its neighbours and the approaches to them. Without mutual support, it is all too easy for the enemy to overwhelm a single position and surge through the gap.

Also be aware of situations where a defensive position can be attacked from more than one direction, and allow for such situations when setting up. Such situations are common at night, when lines can easily be penetrated by a cautious attacker, and defensive positions must be prepared to face an attack from any direction.

Defensive positions should be concealed where possible. Ideally, key positions and sites should be set up HIP if possible. Many scenarios allow a Scenario Defender to set up one or two squads HIP, and one potential use for these units is to set them up inside your defensive perimeter in positions which cover the key ground. These units can then ambush any advancing enemy units, possibly catching under FFNAM and/or FFMO. Where HIP is not available, try to set up in positions out of sight of the enemy, so that Concealment may be gained.

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NON-COM - MUNICATION

Non-com: a non-commissioned officer (EG a Squad Leader).
Communication: to talk, exchange ideas and information.

Well that's what this column is all about.

Or at least, it will be once I get some letters. Hopefully, this column will allow us to exchange ideas on playing ASL. I've written some of mine in this issue, so let me know what you think about them.

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COMMANDER'S NOTEBOOK

Continued from page 3

flanks. Deploy a pair of Conscript HS and a pair of 2nd Line squads on each flank, and everything else in the centre. Have the 1st Line and the leaders around the chateau to act as a reaction force. Alternatively, lightly hold the centre and one flank and concentrate on the other (but still keep the 1st Line units around the chateau). Also, try varying the exact units deployed so the set up doesn't become predictable.

The Americans have the initiative but must decide where to enter from. As the Germans will be spread out to cover all possible entry options, entering in one area allows a local concentration of force. The terrain in the west is mostly Open Ground and Grain, which makes crossing it dangerous. The east is mostly Orchards, which offer plenty of LOS Hindrances. The centre has the chateau, which is an obvious German firebase and central point. The east looks to offer the best chance of making good progress, but wait until seeing the German deployment before making a choice.

GEN-ASL-C - THE STREETS OF STALINGRAD

Played twice (Germans 0 - 1 Soviet, 1 draw), taking about 8.5-9 hours to play. This scenario is very balanced, with the majority of games being draws.

Set up is pretty much pre-determined.

The Soviets should put the 10-2 leader and 3 6-2-8s in 1G4, two killer stacks in 1X3 and 1X4, and a randomly deployed concealed shield in the Factory frontline (this prevents a predictable set-up). It is worth taking a Commissar for the rally benefits. The reinforcements should mass in the north, as this offers the most direct route to the Factory. Because of this, KG Stahler should be concentrated in 1U2, with light concealed forces (mostly dummies) to the south. The Germans should concentrate the engineers in 1AA4, and KG Tienham in 1Z7.

The Germans need to break the Factory shield and move the engineers in to DC and FT the main Soviet stacks. Ample use of SMOKE is required to cover the engineers as they do this. The other Germans, particularly KG Stahler must simply hold out as long as possible, as the Soviet attempt to break and overrun 1F5, 1K5 and 1U2. Those Soviets trying to reach the Factory should try to enter from the north. Moving in from the south requires them to cross too much ground (much of it Open as well) to reach the Factory. Too, with no attack on building 1U2, it can dominate the ground they have to cross. They should also consider the possibility of making a Human Wave assault, or using Sewer Movement to enter the Factory. However it is tried, expect lots of casualties.

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FINAL FIRE

That's all for this issue. Hope you enjoyed it. Feel free to write and tell me what you think.

Whether there will be a second issue, and what it might contain, depends on you, the readers. VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is a chance for us ASL players to talk to each other, but if we don't talk, it will fail. It's future is in your hands.

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is an independant British ASL newsletter. It is available free on request (although an SAE is much appreciated). All correspondence should be sent to Pete Phillipps, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester, LE5 0FQ.